Tri-County College Study Reports Oversize #8 Originals #1

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA REPORT

The extent to which the three counties of Saginaw, Bay and Midland may be considered a single geographical unit, with the ability to establish and maintain a college.

By the Sub-Committee on Geographical Area
Tri-County College Study Committee

Submitted February 15, 1956
Bay City Central High School Auditorium

INTRODUCTION

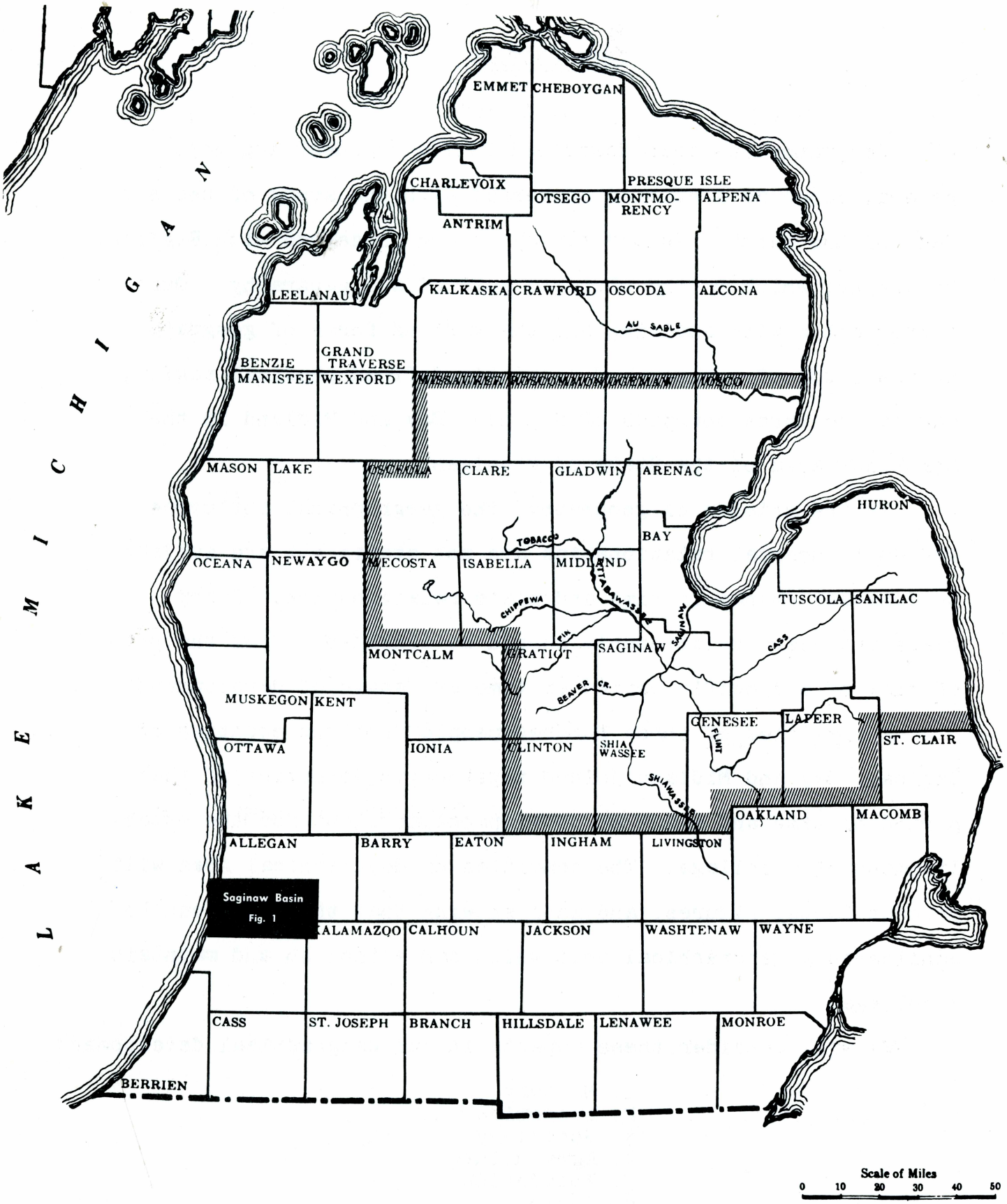
Geography has been described in its broadest and most general sense as a science concerned with the study of the surface of the earth. In our survey we are concerned with Regional Geography, which is the ultimate goal of all geography. Our survey deals with applying all the various forms of geography to the study of a given and carefully defined physical region, namely the three counties of Saginaw, Bay and Midland in the Northeast area of the State of Michigan.

In the science of geography, the geographical influence and environmental relationships are not static but are subject to constant change in time and place relationships. Every place and every relationship should be considered from the point of view of a specific period of time and state of development.

A committee of three hundred people from the counties of Saginaw, Bay and Midland joined together to determine if the period of time and state of development are right for the establishment of a college. The committee on Geographical Area will present facts, figures, and maps showing that this area can be considered a geographical unit which can establish and maintain a college.

We will consider these aspects in our geographical development:

1. History
2. Economics
3. Sociology
4. Agriculture
5. Population
6. Region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MACOMB
ALLEGAN
BARRY
EATON
INGHAM
LIVINGSTON
Saginaw Basin
Fig. 1
KALAMAZOO
CALHOUN
JACKSON
WASHTENAW
WAYNE
CASS
ST. JOSEPH
BRANCH
HILLSDALE
LENAWEE
MONROE
BERRIEN
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

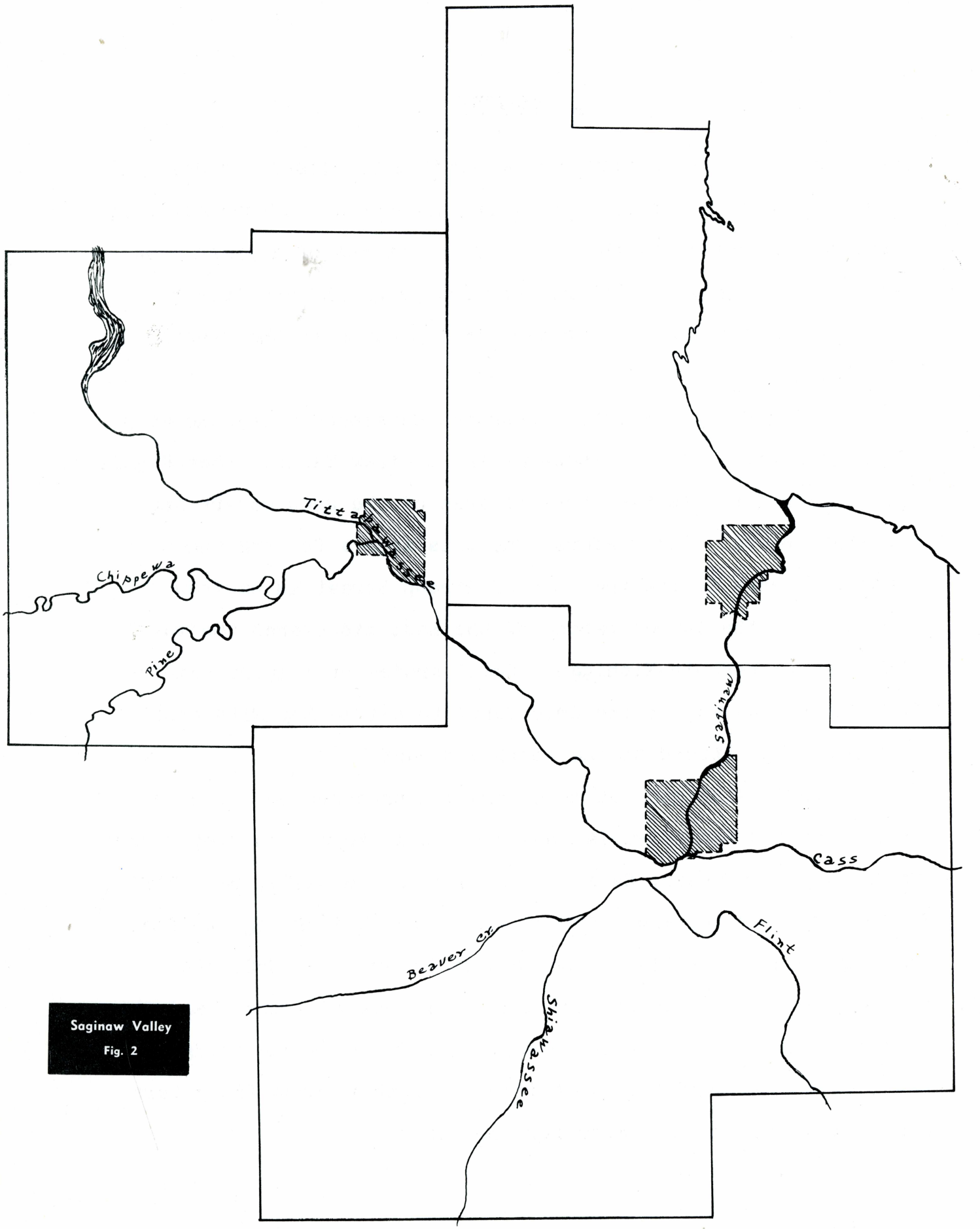
1. HISTORY

Geography and history can be said to be closely related because man is continually modifying the surface of the earth by adapting and using all the physical conditions of a given area. Here in the Saginaw Valley history and geography are inter-related from the first birch bark Indian canoe to the deepest brinewell.

The history of the three counties developed along the many rivers that form what is known as the Saginaw Basin. (See Figure 1) The Indians first settled here because of the good waters and the white birch. Fur traders made this area a fur trading post, located at what is now the foot of Throop Street in Saginaw.

In 1836 the lumber barons of the East discovered the vast timber lands here in Michigan. Small armies of loggers came to Michigan by the way of the Erie Canal to settle Bay City and Saginaw and to spread to the north and east.

In 1872, Michigan cut more logs and produced more lumber than Maine and Pennsylvania combined. All the surrounding rivers, the Flint, Shiawassee, Cass, Tittabawassee, Au Sable, Bad, Rifle, Au Gres, Kawkawlin, and Chippewa were kept full of logs to feed the 112 steam saw mills on the Saginaw River. In 1882, the Saginaw River mills turned out a billion feet of lumber, and the Genesee Street bridge in Saginaw and the Third Avenue bridge in Bay City opened more than 1500 times a month to pass freighters coming and going with lumber for the world.



Saginaw Valley
Fig. 2

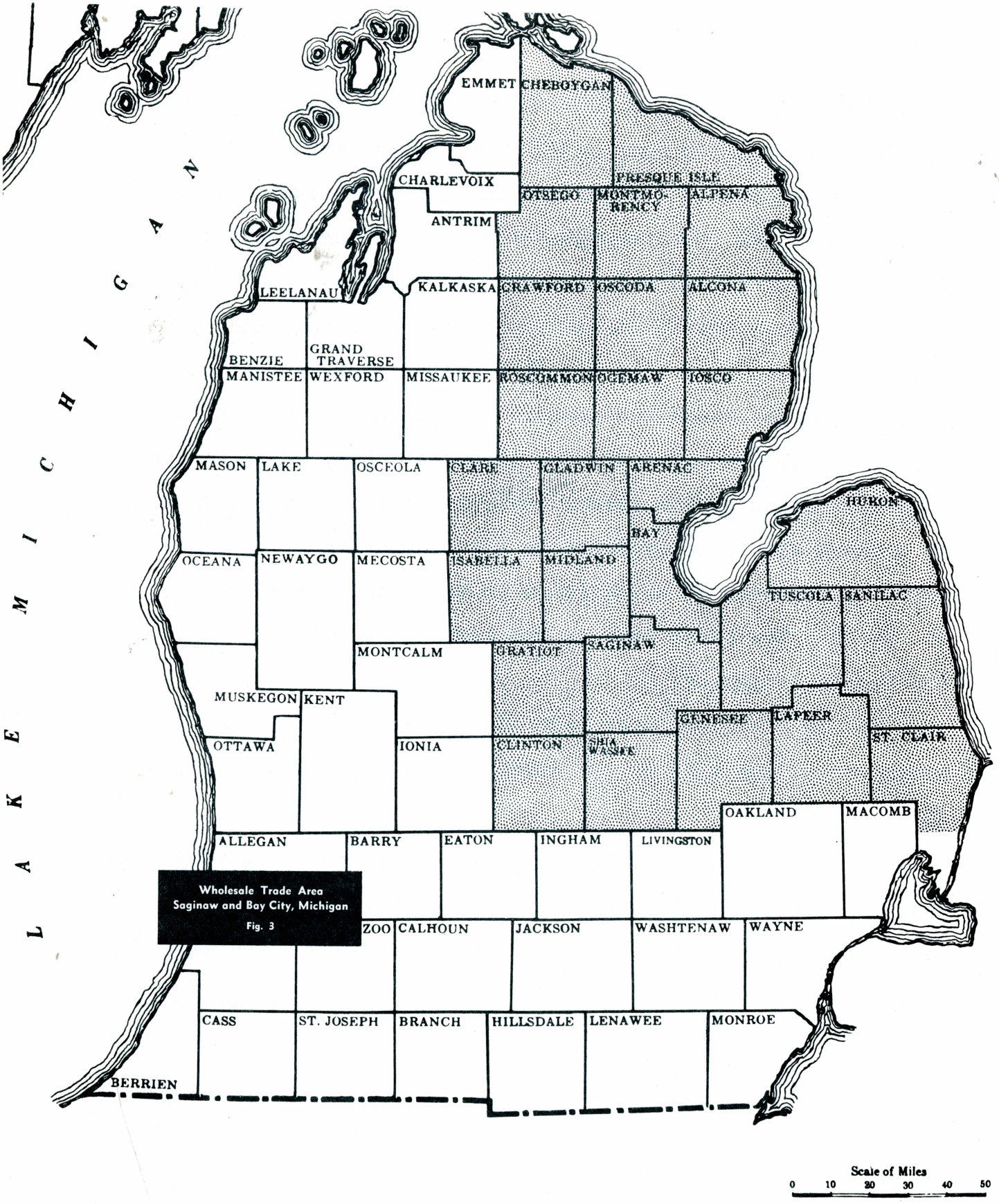
Midland, located at the junction of the Tittabawassee and Chippewa rivers, was also a thriving lumber camp.

With the end of the Saginaw River's great lumber days -- about 1892 -- the total population of the cities of Saginaw and Bay City combined was only about 45,000 people.

When the lumbering industry began to decline, the loss was temporarily offset by the development of soft coal deposits. Coal mining has since disappeared and has been replaced by a thriving, diverse manufacturing industry. Many of these are closely related to the former lumbering days. The lumber camps in Midland wereto be replaced by the production of bromine from the deposits of brine found in the area. In 1890, Dr. Herbert Dow first came to Midland and in 1897 organized The Dow Chemical Company.

As the cut-over lands were cleared and agricultural activity increased at the turn of the century, the three cities became trade centers.

From the same geographical environment, which made up the Saginaw Valley, (see Figure 2), the three counties grew and developed with differences in present-day industry and agriculture but historically bound together.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HILLSDALE
LENAWEE
MONROE
BERRIEN
Wholesale Trade Area
Saginaw and Bay City, Michigan
Fig. 3
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

2. ECONOMICS

a. Industry

The Tri-County Area is a thriving industrial giant. Included in the three counties are ten General Motors plants, one of which is the largest grey iron foundry in the world. The world's largest manufacturer of measuring devices is Lufkin Rule Company. The largest single unit chemical plant with a large plastics division is located in the Tri-County area. Also found here are the leading hoisting equipment and power shovel manufacturers. The area boasts one of the Great Lakes' major shipyards. The impact of the St. Lawrence Seaway is expected to increase greatly this phase of industrial activity. The nation's largest maker of baking machinery, a leader in the manufacture of pre-cut houses, and the world's largest malleable iron foundry are also located here.

The eastern section of the Tri-County Area is the second largest distribution center for petroleum products in Michigan. Eight marine terminal tank farms, with a total storage capacity of 140,000,000 gallons, line the banks at the mouth of the Saginaw River. The supply is maintained by both pipeline and lake tankers.

More than a million tourists visit here yearly during the year-around tourist season.

Stability of employment is a characteristic of the Tri-County area. One section of the area in recent months has led the state in the least percentage of unemployment. Local

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OAKLAND
MACOMB
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EATON
INGHAM
LIVINGSTON
Railroads Serving Area
Fig. 4
MAZOO
CALHOUN
JACKSON
WASHTENAW
WAYNE
CASS
ST. JOSEPH
BRANCH
HILLSDALE
LENAWEE
MONROE
BERRIEN
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

businessmen and industrialists are very confident of continuing prosperity for this section of the state. Recent announcements of industrial building and utility expansion support this confidence in the future economic health of the Tri-County area.

b. Trade and Commerce:

Wholesale houses in the two cities of Saginaw and Bay City serve almost the entire northeast section of the State of Michigan (see Figure 3). The City of Saginaw is the fourth largest wholesale center in Michigan. Saginaw wholesaling represents some $118,000,000 annually in trade. Bay City has some sixty wholesale firms which supply Northern Michigan and the Thumb Area with an approximate annual volume of $65,000,000.

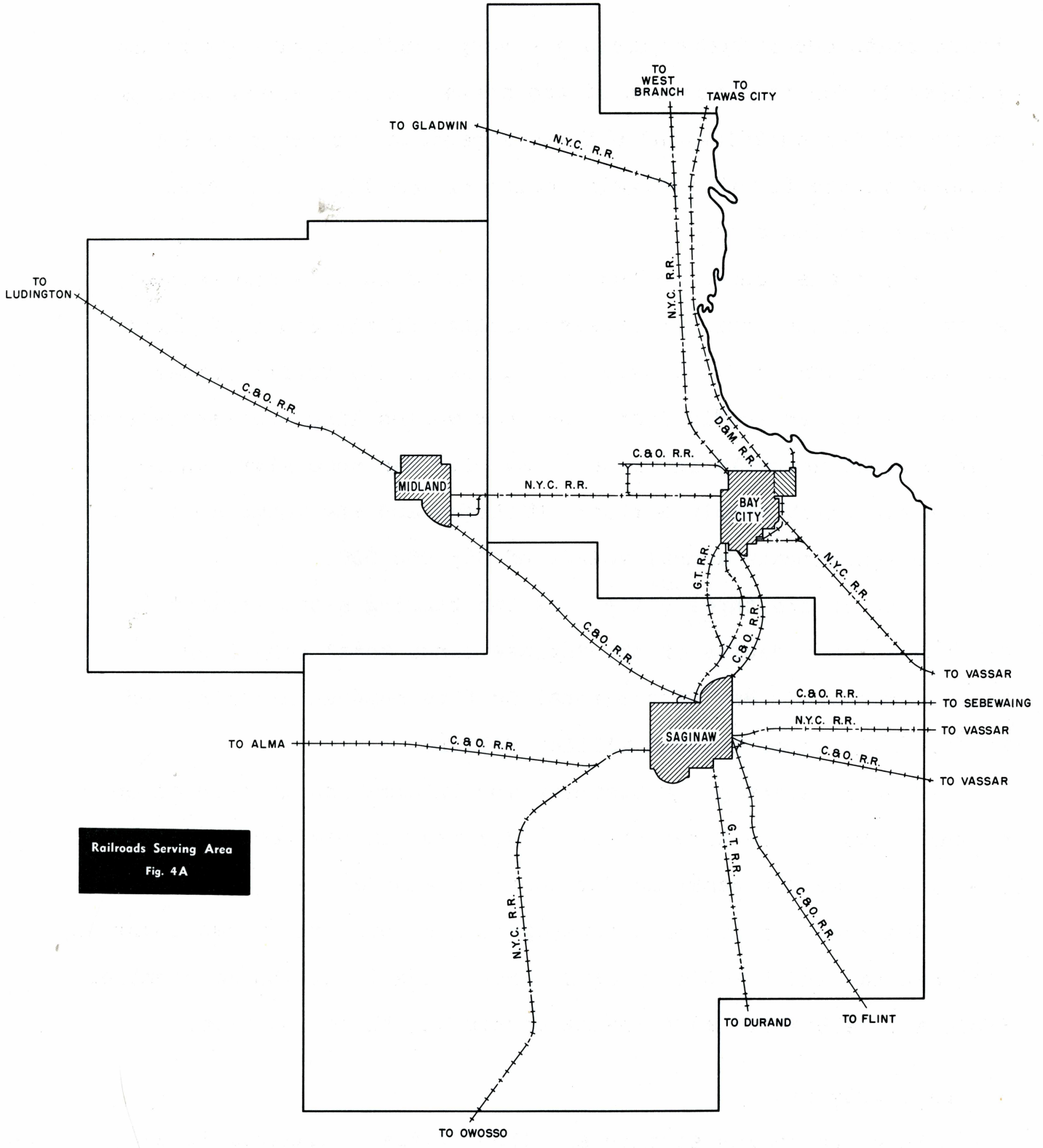
Each of the three cities has two banking establishments. The annual bank debits of the Saginaw banks total some four billion dollars. Bay City's total is five hundred million, and Midland's is three hundred million dollars.

Much interchange of business and information is carried on by the banks of the three cities. One bank in Saginaw is the clearing house for banks as far north as Alpena.

The three cities have newspapers servicing their own counties, with Saginaw and Bay City papers circulating in all three counties. Radio and television advertising covers all three counties.

c. Transportation:

Three railroads service all three cities. Saginaw is a terminal for the C. & O. and Bay City for the New York Central. Both lines go to Midland. (see Figures 4 and 4a.)



Railroads Serving Area
Fig. 4A

State bus lines serve all three counties.

The Tri-City Airport, a joint operation of the three cities, carried a record number of outbound passengers in 1955.

Leading U.S. and State highways connect the three cities with each other and with other parts of the state. (See figures 5 and 6.)

The radius map points out the population potential of the area. (See figures 7 and 8.)

3. SOCIOLOGY

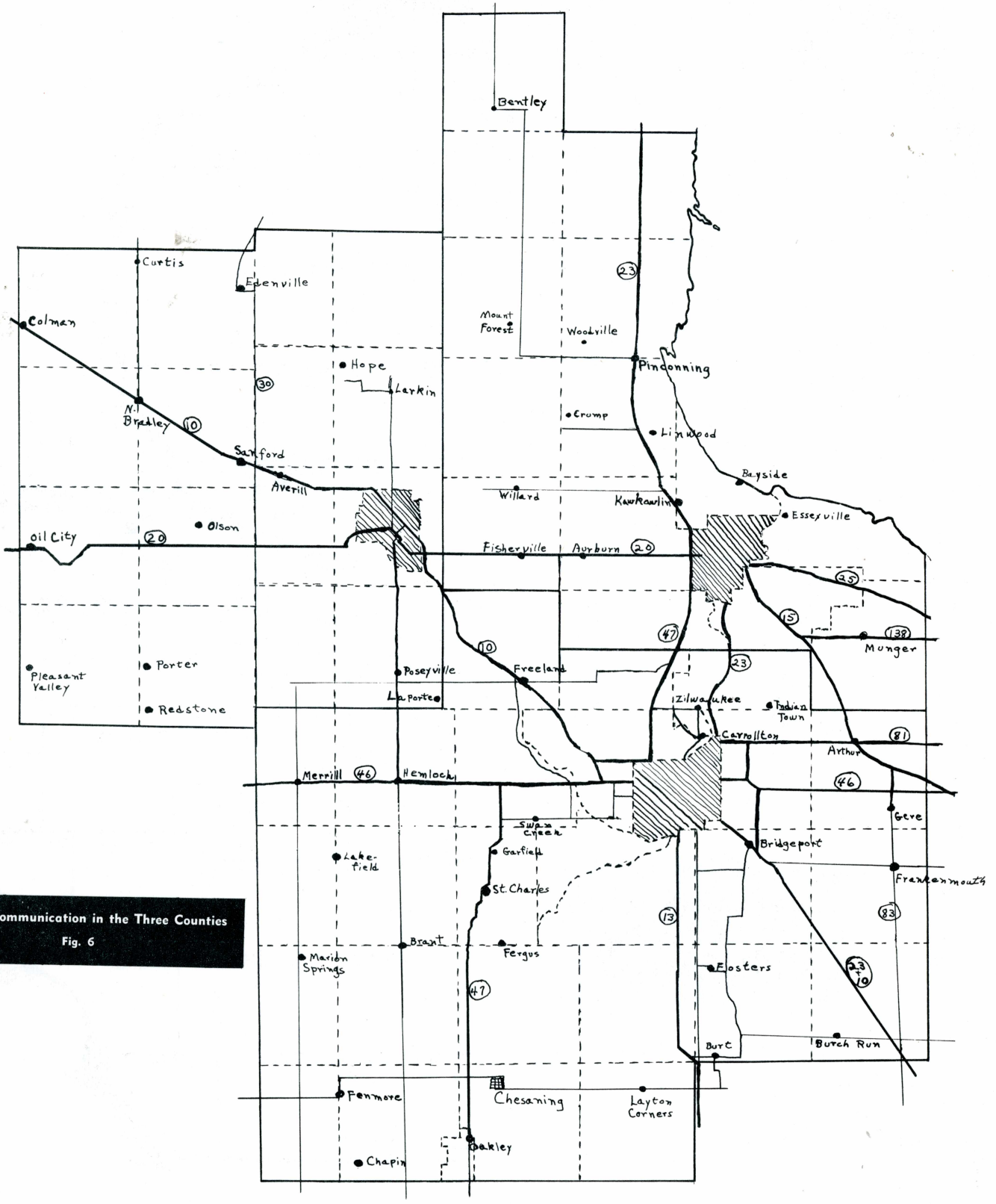
People in the Saginaw Valley should have common interests in a wide field of enterprises, if the area is to be considered a natural ecological unit, to assure the satisfactory operation of a college such as the one under consideration. This study will show various areas in which such unity exists at present, as well as evidence of divergent interests.

All three counties have a predominance of people with a "mixed" ethnic background. (See figure 9.) All counties are growing rapidly in the number of residents. Median age in Midland County is 25.3, in Bay County 28.5, and in Saginaw 28.6.

In number of college educated people, Midland County ranks 11th in the state, Saginaw 33rd, and Bay County 53rd. Median school age completed for the counties is 8.9 for Saginaw, 10.8 for Midland, and 9.0 for Bay. In the cities, median school age completed for Midland is 12.6, for Bay 9.0, and for Saginaw 9.6.

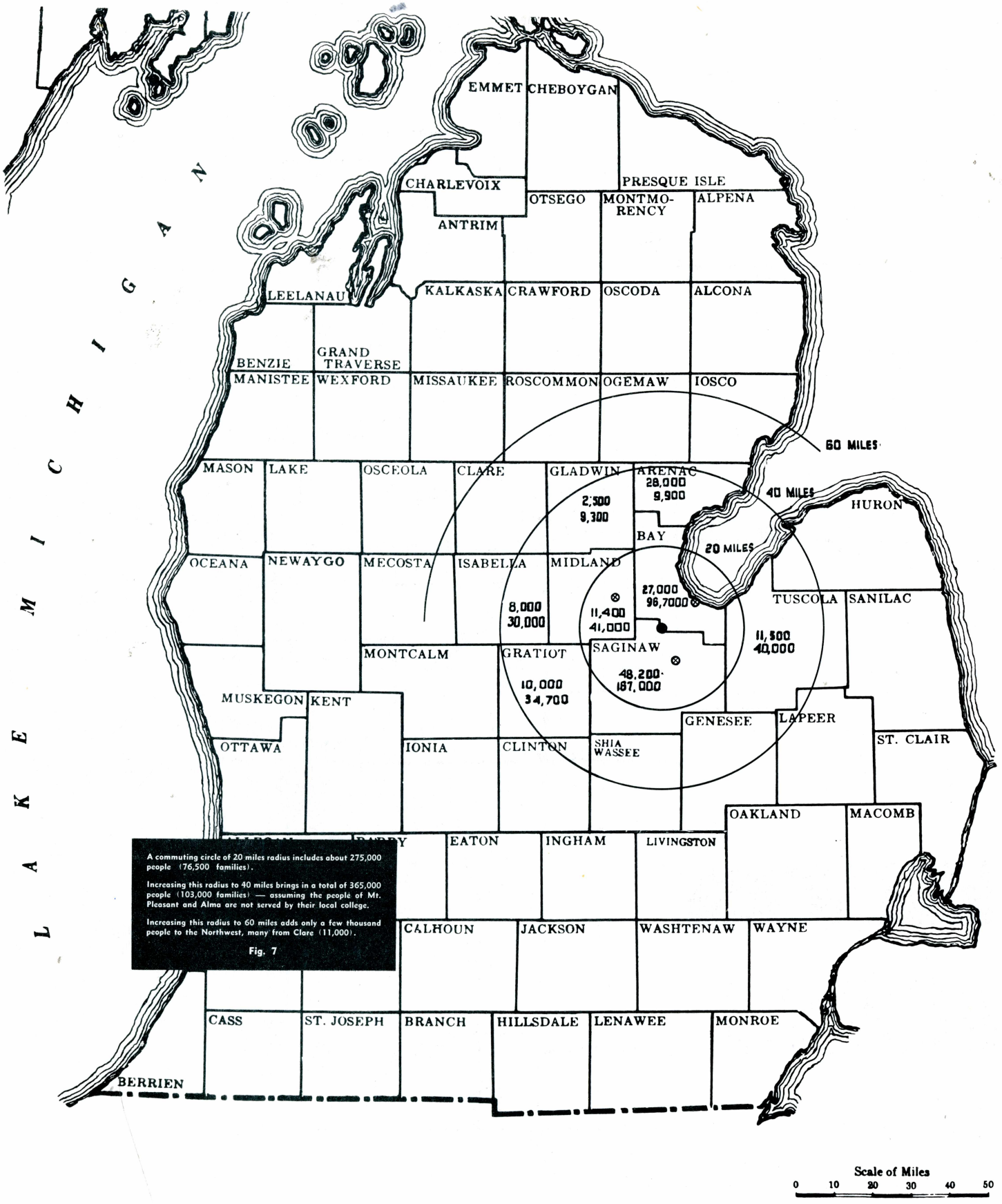
Main highways leading to and connecting the three cities.

Fig. 5



Highway Communication in the Three Counties

Fig. 6



A commuting circle of 20 miles radius includes about 275,000 people (76,500 families).

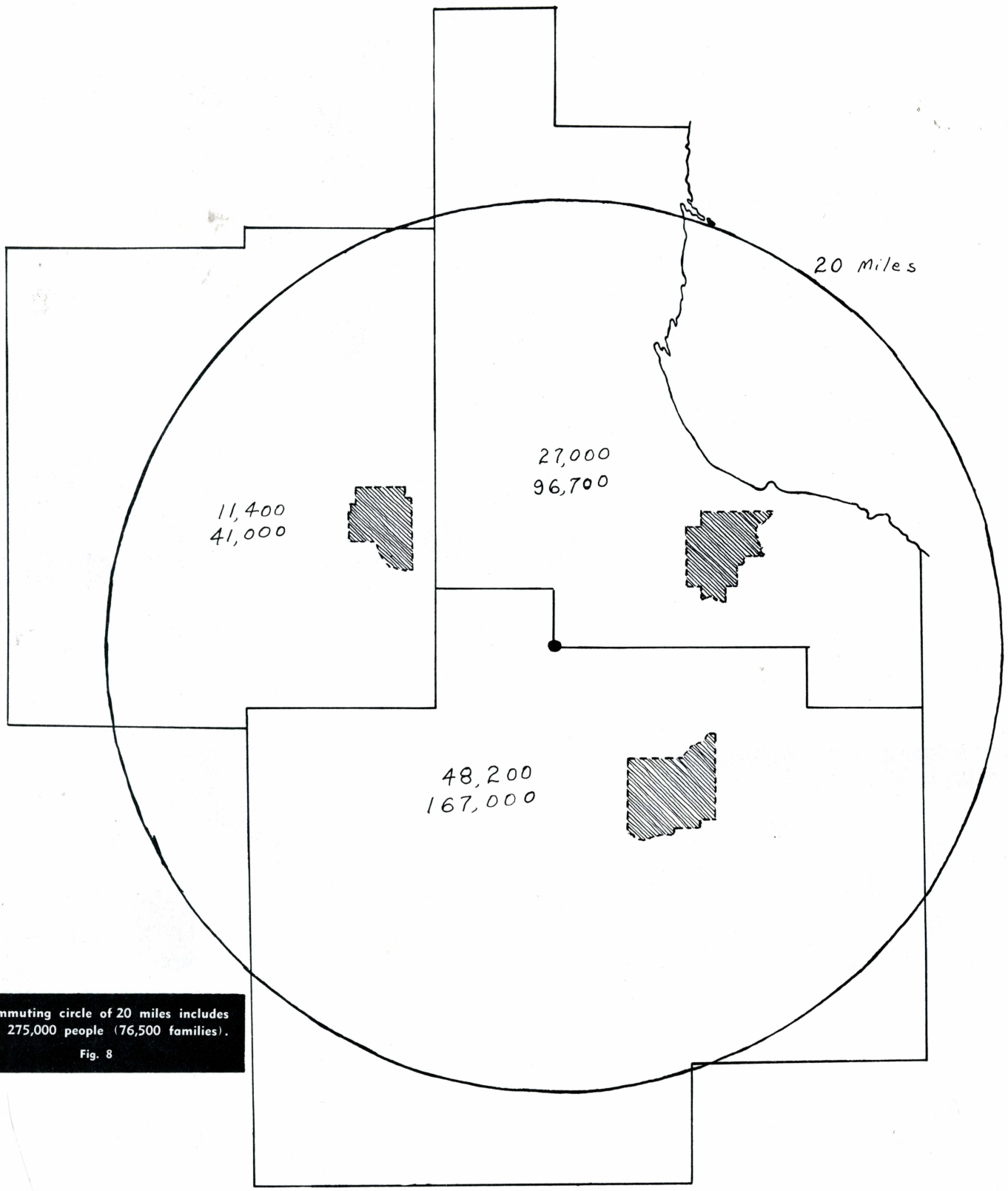
Increasing this radius to 40 miles brings in a total of 365,000 people (103,000 families) — assuming the people of Mt. Pleasant and Alma are not served by their local college.

Increasing this radius to 60 miles adds only a few thousand people to the Northwest, many from Clare (11,000).

Fig. 7

Scale of Miles

0 10 20 30 40 50



A commuting circle of 20 miles includes about 275,000 people (76,500 families).

Fig. 8

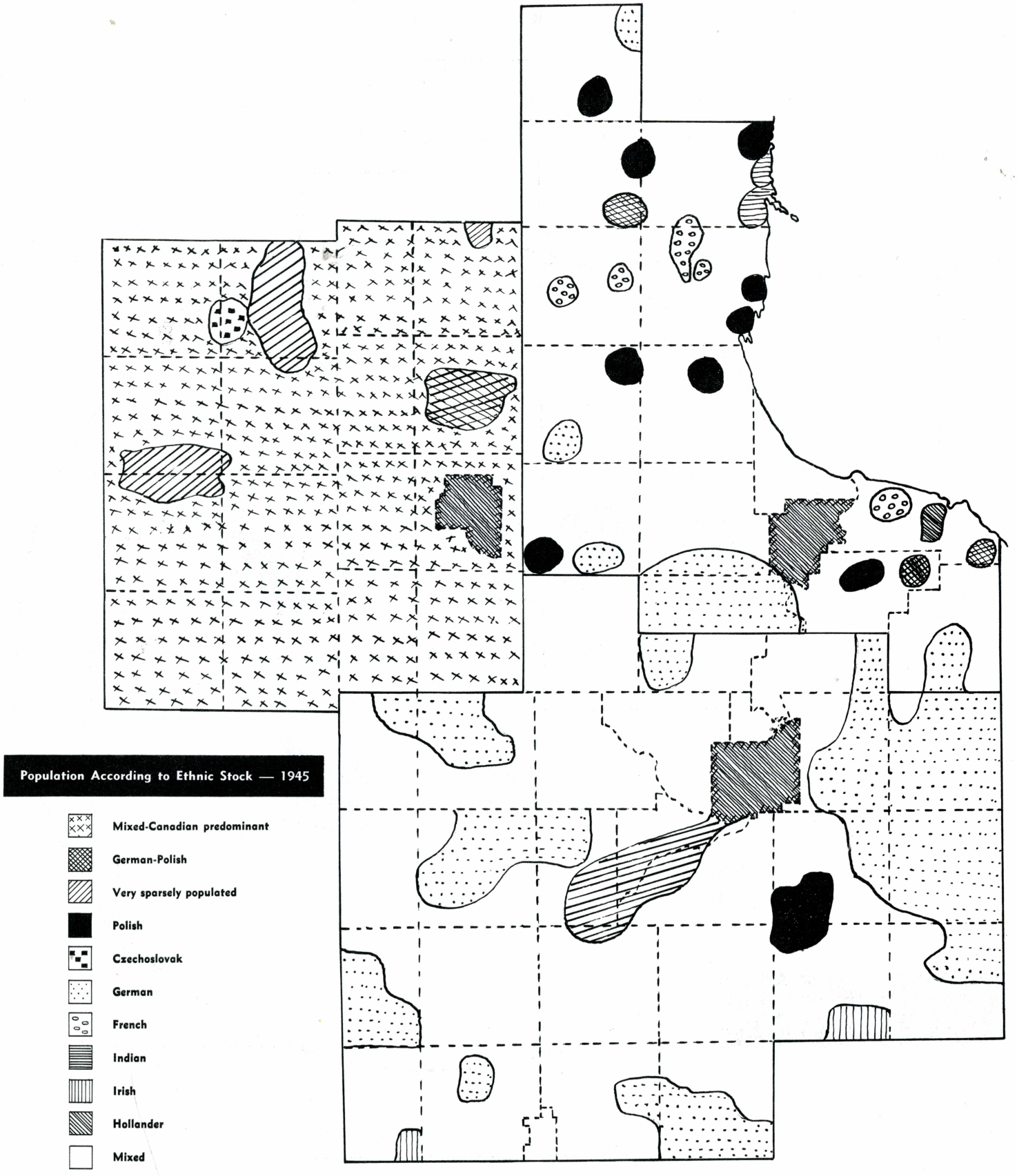

Population According to Ethnic Stock — 1945
Mixed-Canadian predominant
German-Polish
Very sparsely populated
Polish
Czechoslovak
German
French
Indian
Irish
Hollander
Mixed

Fig. 9

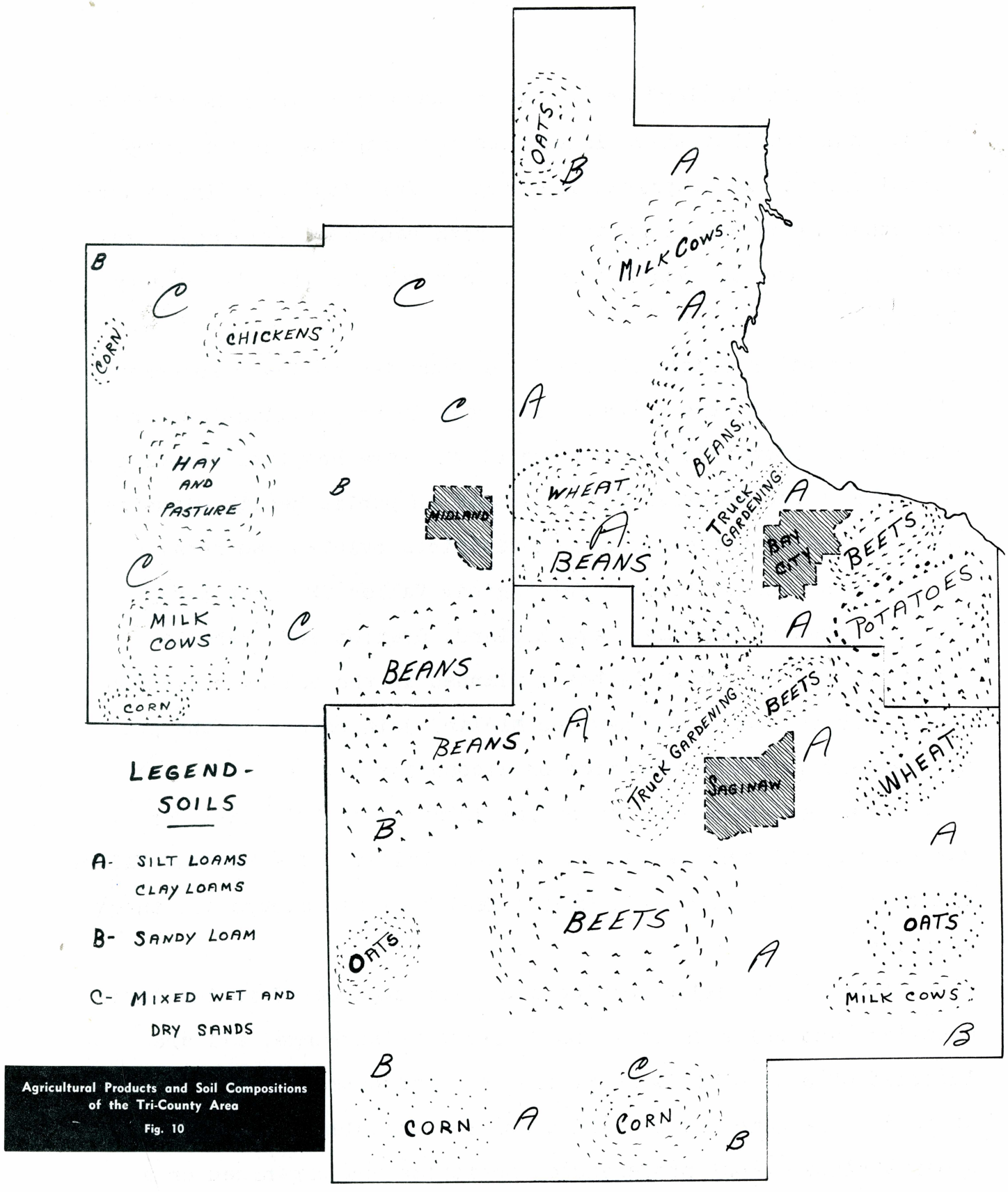
The word "Valley" or "Basin" is used in so many associations as to indicate that there is an accepted grouping of the three counties as to geographical location. "Tri-City" and "Tri-County" are other terms used constantly in both radio and newspaper terminology. Even the weather report is given for the "Tri-County Area."

Cooperation exists in the three counties in law enforcement. All three cities have a common interest in hospitalization, and all medical hospitals are members of the same hospital association.

The three counties work together in public health planning. This is necessary because school districts overlap and rural routes cross county lines. The Saginaw Valley TB Chest X-ray Service takes in Saginaw, Bay, Midland, Gratiot and Isabella Counties, and more work is being planned in the valley region on mental health. Bay, Saginaw and Midland join forces in the polio program and in adult education on alcoholism.

The local area chapter of the International Council for Exceptional Children serves the Saginaw Valley. The Saginaw Valley Children's Clinic and Adult Mental Health Clinic serves all three counties.

Most of the major service clubs are duplicated in the three counties, and while there is no definite interchange, all are informed of each other's activities and projects through district offices. The same may be said of church organizations and some women's clubs. Most professional societies are organized on a tri-county basis.



Agricultural Products and Soil Compositions of the Tri-County Area

Fig. 10

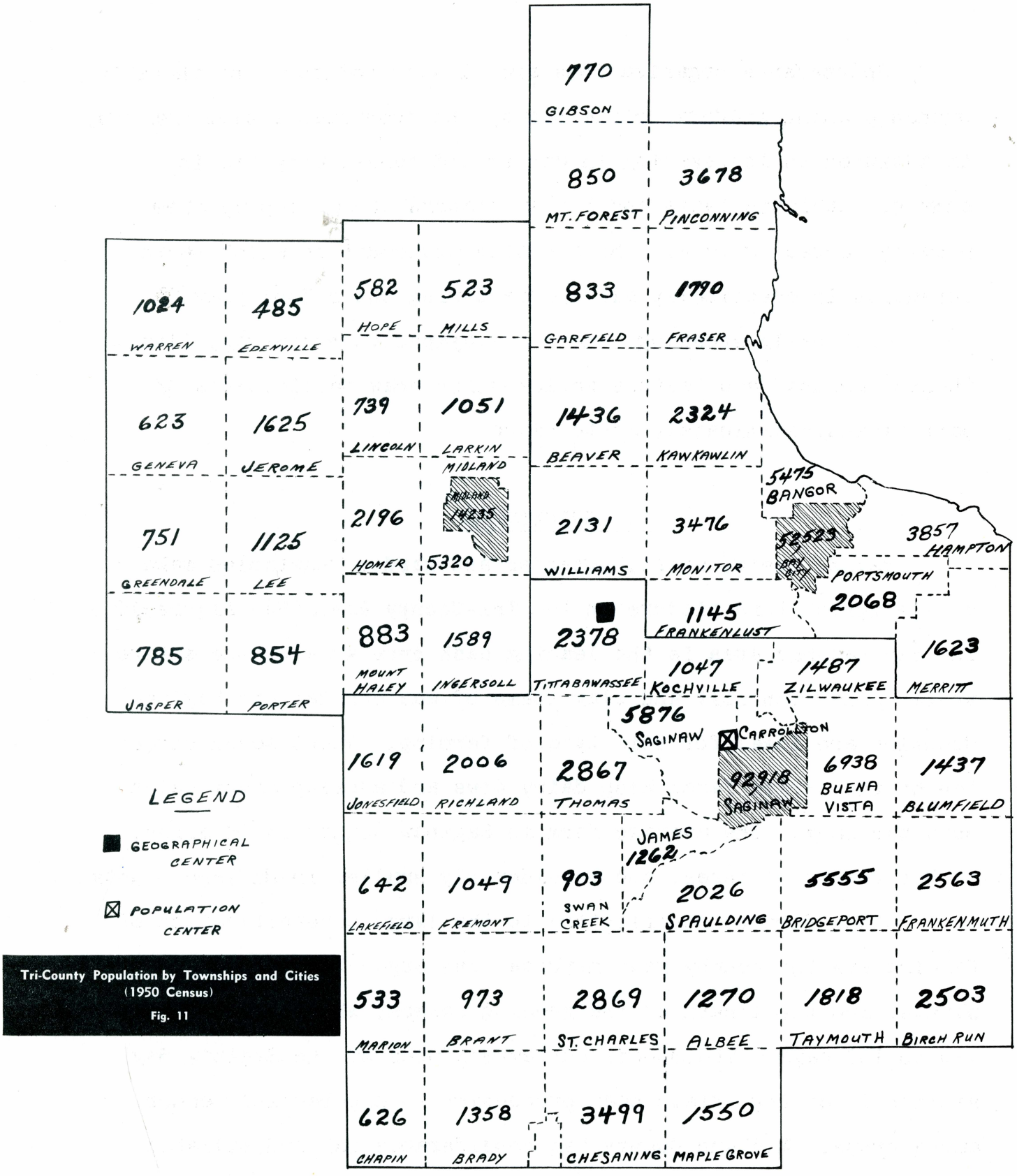
Sportsmen's organizations are closely related, and there is exchange among golfers, rifle teams, and sportsmen's club members, in addition to ice skating in winter and tennis programs in summer. Athletic teams and the spectators who accompany them provide contact with all three cities and counties which share schedules in practically all sports during the school year.

Culturally speaking, there are symphony orchestras, little theatre groups, and lecture series which draw participants or patrons indiscriminately as to place.

4. AGRICULTURE

Beans, beets, wheat, potatoes and garden vegetables make up the agriculture picture in the Tri-County Area. (See figure 10.) The Saginaw-Bay Area is the leading cash crop area of the entire state. The rich silt and clay loams of eastern Bay and Saginaw Counties are ideal for this type of farming. About seven out of ten of the larger farms keep dairy cows and average about seven cows per farm. The average farm in Saginaw County is 94 acres, in Bay County 81 acres, and considerably smaller in Midland County.

Other factors contributing to the large diversification of farming are the nearby good markets, the sugar beet processing plants, and the length of the growing season, which ranges from 130 to 160 days. The moderated temperatures of the Saginaw-Bay section favor dry, field bean production -- a perennial leader among crops. Midland County has considerable hay and tillable



Tri-County Population by Townships and Cities (1950 Census)

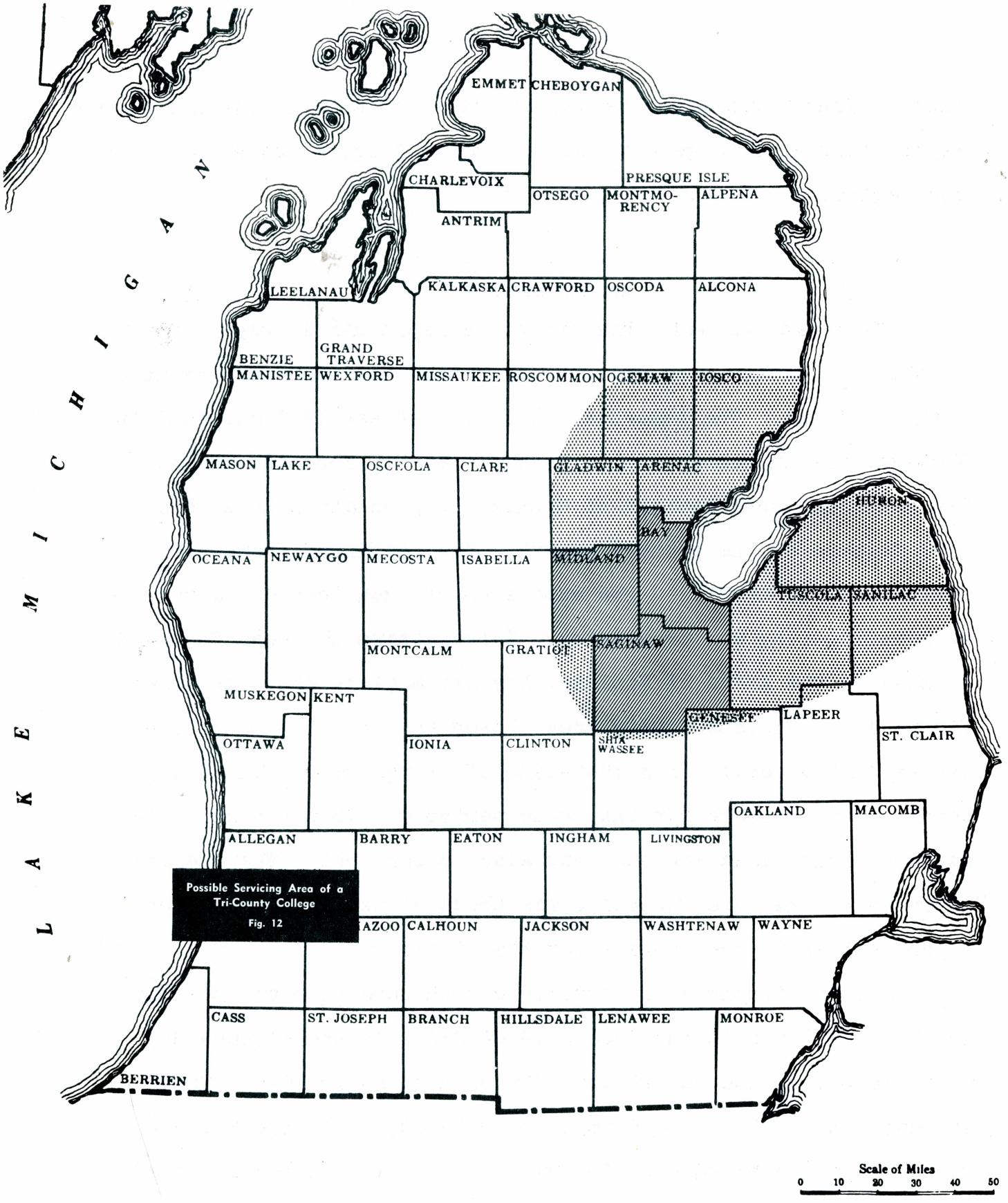
Fig. 11

pasture land. The large percentage of sandy soil in Midland County is not conducive to general farming on as large a scale as in the Saginaw-Bay Area.

5. POPULATION

Michigan has had a history of extraordinarily rapid growth. In the last decade, the state's population has increased by more than one-fifth. The numerical increase between 1940 and 1950 in Michigan was exceeded by only California, New York and Texas. The sustained urbanization of Michigan's population is an essential feature of the state's growth. The continued growth of urban centers paralleled the expansion of such "center" activities as manufacturing and processing. This pattern has been followed closely in the areas of Midland, Bay and Saginaw Counties. (See figure 11.) Midland County area showed an urban and rural increase in the period from 1940-1950 of 32 per cent. The Bay County area increase for that same period was 18 per cent. The Saginaw County area increase was also 18 per cent. The average increase of the three counties was about 23 per cent, or about 2 per cent above the average for the state.

Another factor of importance was the spectacular increase in the birth rate in the decade 1940-1950. In the Midland-Bay area the birth rate was 22 per 1000 population in 1940. This increased to 26.7 per 1000 population in 1950. In the Saginaw County area the birth rate in 1940 was 20.8 and increased to 27.1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MONROE
BERRIEN
Possible Servicing Area of a Tri-County College
Fig. 12
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

in 1950. Coupled with this increase was a declining death rate in each of the three county areas.

The Tri-County area also felt the impact of migration into the state. In Midland County the migrant total was 1800 for the decade 1940-1950. Bay County's population was increased by 1300 migrants, while the Saginaw County area received 2800 migrants in the same period.

Projections of population made by the Bureau of the Census for the State of Michigan indicate a continued population increase for the Tri-County area in the years ahead.

6. REGION

In presenting this area from the standpoint of being the nucleus of a region, we may assume that we could include surrounding territories for a number of miles, depending on traffic conditions, population, and other factors. Keeping in mind the premise of the report by the Subcommittee on Objectives -- namely, that a college, if established here by the three counties of Saginaw, Bay and Midland, could expand into a four-year, degree-granting institution -- we may consider our location as representing a northeast region of the State of Michigan. (See figure 12.) While these additional counties woulld not be considered as part of the Tri-County area, they may be considered as making use of the college on a tuition basis. Dr. John Thaden, Professor of Sociology at Michigan State University, set up this area as a region which includes the following counties: (See figure 10.)

SUMMARY

The purpose of this phase of the Tri-County College Study was to determine to what degree the Tri-County area could be considered a single geographical entity. We have gathered data and have attempted to analyze and interpret it as it relates to our basic question. Our conclusion, based upon this careful research, is that in most respects the Tri-County area, composing the counties of Saginaw, Bay and Midland, is a single geographical unit. This conclusion is based upon the following evidence:

1. Historically, the area was tied closely together by land topography, lumber products and waterways.
2. Industrially, the area presents an inter-related, though diversified, type of manufacture. This gives an element of stability to the industrial complex.
3. Commercially, the area is unified by interchange of trade at both the wholesale and retail levels. Banking and brokerage services cross county lines on an area basis.
4. In transportation and communication the three counties are joined by one national and two state highways. Radio, television, and airport facilities and services are shared without reference to county lines.

5. Agriculturally, the area presents a very similar pattern. In two of the counties the products are almost identical while in the third the similarity exists but the relative importance is less.
6. In cultural and recreational interests, striking similarities were discovered in the Tri-County area.

Numerous instances of inter-county and inter-city relationships led to the conclusion that basically the area presents a unified and highly integrated sociological and economic pattern. Therefore, we conclude that from a geographical standpoint the counties of Saginaw, Bay and Midland could jointly establish and operate an area college.

Members of the Subcommittee on Geographical Area:

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Mr. Paul Harvey, Bay City
The Rev. Mr. Herman Zehnder, Bay City
Mrs. Avery Paxon, Saginaw
Mr. Howard Cornford, Saginaw
Mrs. Audra Francis, Saginaw
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Mrs. Harry Lee, Midland
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